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ABSTRACT

This paper suggests that teacher education and assessment share in being bull's-eyes for those who would target culprits for educational problems in the U.S. Section 1 examines what is different about today's education, including: education is a political combat zone; there is a crisis in the number of teachers; there is a crisis in teacher quality; there are less diverse teachers and more diverse students; student learning is the yardstick; and public confidence is in free fall. Section 2 examines various actions that must be taken immediately, most of which require joint action of assessment specialists and teacher experts. This includes building standards and assessments for beginning teachers; reflecting standards in teacher education; building assessments to support student learning; politically supporting standards and assessment; assuring all students good teachers; and becoming rigorous researchers on student results. The paper concludes that change must be drastic and immediate, and people must admit their dissatisfaction with the current state of things and work together in new ways to accomplish more than ever dared before. (SM)

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Assessment and Teacher Education

Sharing the Bull's-Eye

Nancy S. Cole

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Charles W. Hunt
1880-1973

With a passion for teaching and a love of people, Charles Wesley Hunt helped shape teacher education in America for nearly half a century. His career spanned the range of educational responsibilities—teacher; university dean; president of the State Teachers College at Oneonta, New York; and volunteer in national associations for teacher education.

As secretary/treasurer first of the American Association of Teachers Colleges and subsequently the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), which he helped create, Dr. Hunt participated directly in the changes sweeping teacher education during the mid-20th century. He worked diligently to develop our national association as the vehicle to stimulate and effect necessary changes in the education of teachers. The tools for change were varied, but of special significance were institutional accreditation, qualitative standards for effective programs, and inclusion of all types of higher education institutions.

When the lecture series honoring him was established in 1960, Dr. Hunt stated:

> In the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, we have come from our varying stations across the nation to share our experience, to pool our strength, and to play our role in the galaxy of institutional organizations which are very important in our national culture. The gradual assembling of all [collegiate] institutions for the preparation of teachers into one working group is a movement of great significance.

Today is the future that Charlie Hunt could only dream about. It is the future his life's work made possible. While I am sure he would applaud our accomplishments, I am equally sure he would urge us to look beyond our horizon, to anticipate the challenges of the future, and to prepare ourselves to meet that future with understanding and enthusiasm.

Edward C. Pomeroy
Executive Director *Emeritus*
AACTE

Introduction

It is a pleasure to be back at an AACTE meeting. There remains a great soft spot in my heart for those who struggle with the challenges of teacher education. And in this the 39th year since it was established, it is a special honor to give the Charles W. Hunt lecture.

When I was a dean of education, I thought times could not get worse for teacher education. Even then, like Lewis Carroll's Red Queen, we had to run as fast as we could just to stand still.

What strikes me is that the attacks on teacher education today are indeed stronger than ever and teacher education has become almost everyone's favorite target, along with assessment I might add.

Teacher education and assessment share in being bull's-eyes for those who would target culprits for educational problems in this nation.

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It is in the nature of these conferences, and of speakers at such conferences, that you get a lot more Chicken Littles than you do Pollyannas. We speakers become the gloomy weather predictors—almost no sunny skies ahead, but lots of small craft warnings.

With such a constant pounding of dire warnings about education, all of us can become deaf to the very signals that need our attention the most.

As president of ETS and as a former dean of education, I see a lot of data and hear from a lot of people who tell me there is a growing impatience with both assessment and teacher education, a growing feeling that we are part of the problem rather than the solution, a growing belief that they will have to go around us if genuine education reform is to take place.

Am I telling you something you haven't realized? Probably not. But I think the situation we find ourselves in today is at a *new, intense* level of "change drastically or become irrelevant." And I believe the necessary response from both assessment and teacher education is quite different from what many of us are prepared to do.

The interlocking activities of assessment and teacher education share the uncomfortable center of the bull's-eye. I want to discuss with you this evening the dilemmas we face now and some actions I believe our society is *demanding* of us.

What is Different Today?

It is important to determine if things are much the same as they have been for many years or if we are really in a new situation. Certainly, teacher education and assessment are not new targets, but I believe there are some very serious differences today that should make us take a new look at our positions, at the persistent attacks on us, and at our less-than-effective responses to those attacks.

Let me begin with those differences.

Education Is a Political Combat Zone

Education has never been more prominent in the political arena. This unusual politics of education creates a situation of positives and negatives for change:

- People are fond of easy answers.
- The issues are contentious.
- Search for "who's to blame?" with a focus on accountability.

Point 1: Politics is more intertwined with education than ever. Education is not an academic or scholarly enterprise alone, and more than ever, we must learn to be adept politically to work more effectively together across groups who share common interests, to mobilize to support key issues jointly, and to face up to issues such as accountability that are viewed as essential within the political enterprise. Last week in New Hampshire, [President Bill Clinton] said that in order to improve our schools we must have "a revolution in accountability."

Crisis in Number of Teachers

There is widespread recognition that the nation faces a severe teacher shortage.

There are concerns about the large numbers of teachers that are needed:

- The nation's teaching force faces a massive turnover with retirements from aging teachers. In Massachusetts, outside of Boston, there are 80,000 K-12 teachers and of those, 29,000 are over the age of 55. Currently, they lose 1,700 veteran teachers a year to retirement, but in eight years they expect to lose 7,000 annually. Massachusetts has visited 48 campuses across the country to recruit, and *next* month is offering a $20,000 signing bonus to the 50 top qualified, beginning teachers. In New York City, they have gone as far afield as Austria and Spain to recruit new teachers. Meanwhile, in sparsely populated Nebraska, they expect within four years to have 1,600 teaching positions that they will be unable to fill.

- The U.S. Department of Education estimates that the nation will need 2.2 million new teachers in the next 10 years as teachers retire, student enrollment rises, and smaller class sizes are advocated. (California must add 20,000 new teachers to the teaching cadre next year alone, and for the first time is conducting a statewide advertising campaign to recruit candidates.)

There is concern about the financial resources to attract qualified and capable teachers to teaching in large enough numbers to fill the need.

- Teaching is widely recognized as an underpaid profession as its status as a public servant of sorts and its history as a job for women tends to keep pay low. In the highly expensive area of Silicon Valley, California, the starting salary for teachers is an average of $27,000 to $28,000. The economic reality of teacher pay has to be analyzed with balance and care for the public to see and accept. If we wish to improve teachers, we have to be involved in the struggle to improve teachers' pay. We can't just sit around during our faculty coffee breaks and complain about what the state legislature is not doing. We must become activists on this issue in a way we have never been willing to do before.

> Politics is more intertwined with education than ever.

Point 2: There is increased public understanding of the number problem that plagues efforts to improve the teaching force. The time is ripe, with adroit political positioning, to make the connection between the demand for more teachers and the pay of teachers—*if* such connections include strong burdens on us for quality and accountability.

Crisis in Teacher Quality

There is widespread concern about the quality of the nation's teaching force.

There is concern about the preparedness of current teachers for their jobs.

- Many teachers are not trained in the subjects they teach (18 percent of grade 7-12 teachers whose main assignment was math, neither majored, minored, nor received a graduate degree in the subject according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).
- Only one in five teachers told a national survey they felt well prepared to work in a modern classroom. Equal numbers expressed low confidence in using modern technology or in working with students from diverse backgrounds.
- The recent results in Massachusetts again raised the issue of the basic literacy level of teachers and its adequacy.
- Results of a recent study of the SAT and ACT scores of students completing teacher education and passing licensing requirements, to

be reported at this conference by some of my colleagues, indicated that, in most fields, teacher candidates scored on a par with students majoring in the same field but not entering teaching. The basic academic preparedness of teacher candidates is sufficient to support learning to be a good teacher, that is, if we find the ways to provide that learning in teacher education and in the early years of teaching.

- Raising standards for teacher licensure is on the front burner, accentuated by U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley's recent remarks. If you have examined state licensing tests recently, you would feel, as I do, that this is not an unreasonable action. However, most licensing tests examine a narrow portion of what it takes to be a teacher. Many states have specifically excluded teaching practice from the exam process. Do we accept the current testing processes or do we vigorously challenge what the licensing process should more reasonably entail, including much stronger information from teacher education about the readiness of graduates for actual teaching? Do we just defend the status quo, or do we admit weaknesses—in teacher education and in testing—and work to make significant advances.

Point 3: There is a crisis of quality in America's teaching force. If we take on quality issues in a serious way, our testing, our programs, and our licensure procedures have to change.

Less Diverse Teachers, More Diverse Students

The diversity of America's students is greater than ever and the diversity of America's teachers is decreasing.

- Recent figures show that the number of white students in public schools is 64.8 percent, and yet the number of white teachers is 90.7. The number of minority students is 35.1 percent, and yet the number of minority teachers is 9.3.
- Of the 105,509 people who received a bachelor's degree in education in 1996, less than seven percent were African-American, and less than 3.5 percent were Hispanic. Yet African-American and Hispanic students make up 30.3 percent of the K-12 student population.
- Almost 14 percent of young people between five and 17 do not speak English at home.

Point 4: This mismatch of the teaching force to the student body has never been so large. People should look to educators for a strategy to address this disconnect. What is our strategy?

Student Learning is the Yardstick

Student learning is increasingly becoming the yardstick of improvement efforts. The time of justifying ourselves on the basis of intermediate

variables such as course work of teachers and number of hours of inservice training has gone the way of the 8-track cassette player.

- Disappointing student performances are the figures that trigger the concerns with teaching. Students are not performing well enough on any available measures—norm-referenced standardized tests, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the TIMMS study, the National Adult Literacy Survey—to meet the demands of business leaders for preparedness for the world of work.

> Student learning must be the yardstick of success of everything we do with teaching and teacher education.

- The focus of business leaders and parents alike is on the achievement of students. "The proof of the pudding," the good things we hope for teaching and teacher education, "is in the eating"—student achievement.
- Although testing is attacked fiercely, the fact is the public believes the tests that demonstrate that student performance needs improvement, and I do too. But I also believe, as many of you do, that the tests need to be very different and greatly improved. So I can either choose to defend the tests as they are, or work with outstanding educators to make them much better so we can more reasonably stake teaching performances on the results of students. I can argue one cannot use tests for teacher accountability because of the variability of students at the beginning of instruction, or I can risk finding a way that we can measure student progress from wherever students start.

As I said at the beginning, our dilemmas are similar ones. Do we dig our heels in or do we face our shortcomings and throw all our resources into improving?

Point 5: Student learning must be the yardstick of success of everything we do with teaching and teacher education. It is being required of us by others and it is the right yardstick. However, using that yardstick must then influence strongly everything we do.

Public Confidence is in Free Fall

My final point about "what is different today?" is perhaps the most frightening one of all. There is a drastic decline in the energy and confidence about real reform, both within the profession and in the general public.

- For many years the public has expressed confidence in the teachers they know but considerably less in the system of teaching and schooling and teacher education. Today, teacher education has moved to the head of the list for which little confidence exists.

- We have argued for so long that we are doing the best we can, that the public and we, ourselves, have bought our argument. And the public is increasingly saying: "If this is the best you can do, then we have to find someone else to do it."
- It is only if we recognize and admit that we are not doing the best we can—in testing and teacher education—that we can hope to regain public confidence.

Point 6: Today, public confidence in our work is in free fall. With our energy and resolve on the downturn as well, we must change our approach drastically or be bypassed.

We who are in assessment and teacher education must admit that we can do better—everyone knows it anyway. We must recommit to actions that will regenerate energy and confidence.

What Must We Do?

I see six key actions that are essential for us to do immediately. Most of them require joint action of assessment specialists and teaching experts. To be politically viable, all require joining together into alliances, whether we agree with every single aspect of a proposal or with every position each ally has ever taken, or not.

But most importantly, to be politically viable, we must build our actions on principles of good teaching and good assessment. And the most important principle of all is that the entire enterprise is for creating student learning and all actions should be judged against that criterion.

As a recent teacher educator and an assessment specialist, I offer you my action list.

Action 1. Build Standards and Assessments for Beginning Teachers

Define what beginning teachers should know and be able to do in order to produce learning in all students by modeling the standards of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and building broad-based assessments closely linked to those standards.

- We should take on this task as our teacher education responsibility, working with states and others who share our concerns.
- We have to build sufficient understanding of our standards—and the assessments of those standards—so that we are willing as teacher educators to not recommend for state licensure those inadequately prepared.

Action 2. Reflect Standards in Teacher Education

- Follow the implications of these standards for how we prepare teachers.

- Shape the teacher education curriculum to prepare students to meet the new standards for being able to produce learning in all students.
- Hold faculties accountable for preparing students who meet the standards.
- Re-examine the faculty requirements to produce students who can meet these standards, including providing new training for faculty and assigning less able faculty outside of teacher education, where necessary.

Action 3. Build Assessments to Support Student Learning

- Include in the standards (for what teachers should know and be able to do) the use of assessments appropriately designed to support student learning in the classroom.
- Have teaching and assessment experts jointly design the new types of assessments that will be focused on judging the progress in student learning and directing the next steps of teaching and learning.
- Train teachers in teacher education programs to use these new assessments effectively.

Action 4. Politically Support Standards *and* Assessment

- Work with all education groups to advocate politically:
- for state licensing standards commensurate with the standards described above;
- for mentoring and other types of school support of new teachers as they transform their learning into regular practice, and for standards and assessments at other key points.

Tie the needed political and financial support for these steps directly to means of accountability at each stage of the teacher's development. Be explicit with the standards at each stage and ensure the assessments at each stage match the standards well.

Action 5. Assure All Students Good Teachers

- Work with education groups to advocate politically for a national goal that all students in public schools should always be taught by competent teachers and even occasionally by outstanding teachers.
- We must produce statistics on numbers of students in each school who are taught by teachers who meet these different levels.
- We must advocate political action to provide additional financial support for districts that do not have sufficient numbers of such teachers to hire competent and/or outstanding (Board certified) teachers.

Action 6. Become Rigorous Researchers on Student Results

By using the best research capability of our universities, determine by rigorous study the extent each of these proposals is meeting its intent to improve student learning.

- Check that the standards and assessments of new teachers produce teachers who can, in fact, produce learning in diverse students.
- Use the most advanced and appropriate measures of student learning—demanding improvement in current assessments to meet this goal and participating in that improvement.
- Re-examine and revise both standards for and assessments of new teachers based on what is learned.
- Assess the implementation of standards in teacher education programs and the relation to the quality of students produced.
- Examine similarly the proposals for standards and assessments at other levels (intermediate competent teacher, master teacher) and test against results in student learning.

Conclusion

Well, I have laid a lot on us, haven't I? Actually, what I am trying to say is that the times are laying a lot on assessment and teacher education whether we like it or not. We are truly in the center of the bull's-eye.

And there are two things we must remind ourselves of constantly:

- We cannot do this through our old ways, nor with mere modifications to the old ways. We have to change drastically our behavior and change it now, or else we run the very real risk of becoming bit players, benchsitters, in the task to which we have dedicated our professional lives.
- And the second admonition we must not forget is that these tasks are *not* beyond our capabilities if we admit our deep dissatisfactions with our success and begin to work together in new ways to accomplish more than we have dared to do before.

At Educational Testing Service, we, too, are struggling with these questions and we know how hard it is, but we are making progress, and we are eager to join with our colleagues in teacher education to achieve what we could never achieve separately.

What is at stake here is the learning of America's youngsters—to help someone *know* something they haven't known before, to help someone be something they haven't been before. And that is ultimately what the people in this room care about.

About the Hunt Lecturer

Nancy Cole is president
of Educational Testing Service

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